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May 3, 2006

VIA HAND DELIVERY

RECEIVED

Marlene H. Dortch, Secretary
Federal Communications Commission
Office of the Secretary
236 Massachusetts Avenue, N.E.
Suite 110
Washington, DC 20002

Federal Communications Commission
Office of Secretary

MAY - 3 2006

Re:

Southern Communications Services, Inc. d/b/a SouthernLINC Wireless E911 Phase II Compliance Plan; CC Docket No. 94-102

Dear Ms. Dortch:

Southern Communications Services, Inc. d/b/a SouthernLINC Wireless (SouthernLINC Wireless"), through its undersigned counsel, today submitted under separate cover its E911 Phase II Compliance Plan pursuant to the Commission's *Order* of November 3, 2005, and an accompanying Request for Confidentiality.

Enclosed please find an original and four copies of the redacted version of the above-captioned Compliance Plan. Please date-stamp the enclosed extra copy and return it in the envelope provided. If you have any questions regarding this filing, please do not hesitate to contact the undersigned.

Respectfully submitted,

Christine M. Gill

Enclosures

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Revision of the Commission's Rules to Ensure Compatibility with Enhanced 911 Emergency Calling Systems; Request for Waiver by Southern Communications Services, Inc. d/b/a SouthernLINC Wireless, CC Docket No. 94-102, Order, FCC 05-188 (rel. Nov. 3, 2005) ("Order") at ¶ 20.

REDACTED - FOR PUBLIC INSPECTION

BEFORE THE FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION WASHINGTON, D.C. 20554

In the Matter of)		
Revision of the Commission's Rules To Ensure Compatibility with Enhanced 911 Emergency Calling Systems)	CC Docket No. 94-102	
Request for Waiver By Southern Communications Services, Inc. d/b/a)		RECEIVED
SouthernLINC Wireless)		MAY - 3 2006

To: The Commission

Federal Communications Commission Office of Secretary

SOUTHERNLINC WIRELESS E911 PHASE II "COMPLIANCE PLAN"

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Dated: May 3, 2006

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SUMMARY

In its *Order*, released November 3, 2005, the FCC granted SouthernLINC Wireless a ten-month extension until November 3, 2006, of the deadline to achieve 95% penetration of E911 Phase II compliant phones. The FCC required SouthernLINC Wireless to file, within six months of the release of the *Order*, a "compliance plan" which was to include progress SouthernLINC Wireless has made on: (1) expanding network coverage to reduce the number of customers relying on high-power, non-A-GPS capable handsets, (2) working with a vendor to obtain higher-power A-GPS capable phones, and (3) increasing efforts to ensure that customers reflash their handsets or upgrade to location-capable phones.

While SouthernLINC Wireless' network expansion activities will improve coverage in rural areas, network expansion in and of itself is not likely to cause subscribers to trade in their higher-power handsets for location-capable phones.

SouthernLINC Wireless has also determined that it cannot obtain higher-power A-GPS-capable handsets from any vendor. Motorola, its handset and network equipment supplier, has made it clear to SouthernLINC Wireless that it will not produce a higher-power Phase II capable handset with the proprietary iDEN technology used by SouthernLINC Wireless.

SouthernLINC Wireless will continue its extensive and successful customer education and outreach program, which to date has led to 60% penetration of Phase II compliant phones, up from 0% less than two years ago, and 54% just three months ago. SouthernLINC Wireless has increased these customer-focused efforts in 2006 and will continue to enhance its initiatives as may be required to achieve full Phase II compliance.

BEFORE THE FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION WASHINGTON, D.C. 20554

In the Matter of)	
)	
Revision of the Commission's Rules To)	
Ensure Compatibility with Enhanced 911)	CC Docket No. 94-102
Emergency Calling Systems)	
)	
Request for Waiver By Southern)	
Communications Services, Inc. d/b/a)	
SouthernLINC Wireless)	

To: The Commission

SOUTHERNLINC WIRELESS E911 PHASE II "COMPLIANCE PLAN"

Pursuant to the *Order* of the Federal Communications Commission ("FCC" or "Commission") of November 3, 2005, in the above-captioned proceeding, ¹ Southern Communications Services, Inc. d/b/a SouthernLINC Wireless ("SouthernLINC Wireless") hereby submits its "compliance plan" on the measures SouthernLINC Wireless is taking to reach a ninety-five percent A-GPS handset penetration rate as quickly as possible. SouthernLINC Wireless notes that it filed a Petition for Reconsideration and Clarification of the *Order* on December 5, 2005, ² which is still pending before the Commission. In its Petition, SouthernLINC Wireless requested, *inter alia*, that the Commission eliminate the compliance plan filing

¹/ Revision of the Commission's Rules to Ensure Compatibility with Enhanced 911 Emergency Calling Systems; Request for Waiver by Southern Communications Services, Inc. d/b/a SouthernLINC Wireless, CC Docket No. 94-102, Order, FCC 05-188 (rel. Nov. 3, 2005) ("Order") (granting SouthernLINC Wireless until November 3, 2006, to achieve ninety-five percent penetration of location-capable handsets among its subscriber base and requiring the filing of quarterly status reports).

² / Petition for Reconsideration and Clarification of SouthernLINC Wireless, CC Docket No. 94-102, filed December 5, 2005 ("Petition").

requirement or, in the alternative, remove the requirement that the plan address SouthernLINC Wireless' progress in expanding network coverage and in working with its vendor to obtain higher-power location-capable handsets.³ SouthernLINC Wireless further notes that, to date, it is the only Tier III carrier required by the Commission to submit a compliance plan as a condition of a grant of waiver of the handset penetration deadline.

Pending Commission action on SouthernLINC Wireless' Petition, and in order to ensure full compliance with the *Order*, SouthernLINC Wireless is making the instant submission without prejudice to the positions set forth in, and relief sought by, its Petition.

I. BACKGROUND

On July 26, 2005, SouthernLINC Wireless, a "qualified Tier III carrier" as that term is defined in Section 107 of the *ENHANCE 911 Act*, ⁴ filed a Request for Waiver which sought a limited 24-month extension of the Commission's December 31, 2005, deadline to achieve 95% penetration of location-capable handsets among its subscriber base. ⁵ As set forth in the Request for Waiver and subsequent filings, SouthernLINC Wireless faces numerous challenges in its efforts to achieve the required level of penetration of location-capable handsets, including (i) a July 2004 latent software defect in the Motorola A-GPS-equipped handsets used by SouthernLINC Wireless subscribers that rendered all such handsets incapable of providing E911 location information ⁶; (ii) the substantial portion of handsets assigned to enterprise or

³/ Petition at 14.

⁴/ National Telecommunications and Information Administration Organization Act – Amendment, Pub. L. No. 108-494, 118 Stat. 3986 (2004) ("ENHANCE 911 Act").

⁵ / Request for Waiver by SouthernLINC Wireless, CC Docket No. 94-102, filed July 26, 2005 ("Request for Waiver").

⁶/ SouthernLINC Wireless cannot emphasize strongly enough how devastating the emergence of this software defect was to its Phase II compliance. It wiped out all of the results of all of the Phase II efforts that SouthernLINC Wireless had undertaken up until that point in time.

government accounts that typically have long-term equipment replacement cycles and are reluctant to upgrade from their current handsets to new location-capable handsets; and (iii) the number of SouthernLINC Wireless subscribers who utilize and rely on the range and coverage of high-power 1 and 3 watt digital handsets and who are unwilling to upgrade to a lower-powered (0.6 watt) location-capable handset, which could potentially decrease their ability to receive any communications services – including emergency services – in remote areas.⁷

The Commission's *Order*, released November 3, 2005, granted SouthernLINC Wireless a ten-month extension of the E911 Phase II deadline until November 3, 2006, nearly fourteen months prior to the deadline requested by SouthernLINC Wireless. The Commission also imposed several conditions on its grant of limited relief.⁸ Among other conditions, the Commission required SouthernLINC Wireless to file, within six months of the release of the *Order (i.e.*, by May 3, 2006), a compliance plan setting forth "with specificity, the concrete measures SouthernLINC will undertake to reach a ninety-five percent A-GPS handset penetration rate by November 3, 2006." The Commission stated that it "expect[ed] these

Addressing the problem with customer handsets has diverted personnel and consumed resources that could have been focused elsewhere, including on encouraging customers on older equipment to upgrade to A-GPS capable phones. Given that the affected phones function normally in all other respects, customers, in most instances, most likely do not perceive a problem and a subsequent need to act.

⁷ / See, e.g., Request for Waiver at 2 − 3; see also SouthernLINC Wireless Notice of Ex Parte Presentation, CC Docket No. 94-102, filed September 9, 2005; SouthernLINC Wireless Response to Request for Additional Information Supporting its Request for Waiver of the E911 Phase II handset Deployment Deadline, CC Docket No. 94-102, filed October 26, 2005 ("Supplemental Filing").

 $^{^8}$ / Order at ¶ 22. As noted above, SouthernLINC Wireless' Petition for Reconsideration and Clarification, filed December 5, 2005, seeks relief from the conditions imposed by the Order. See Petition at 5 – 16. The Petition also seeks reconsideration of the revised deadline of November 3, 2006. *Id.* at 16 – 18.

⁹ / Order at ¶ 20.

measures . . . to include progress made on the following: (1) expanding network coverage to reduce the number of customers relying on high-power, non-A-GPS capable handsets, (2) working with its handset vendor (or other vendors) in obtaining handset models that operate at higher-power and with A-GPS capability, and (3) increasing efforts to ensure that customers reflash their handsets or upgrade to A-GPS phones, as applicable." The following sections detail SouthernLINC Wireless' efforts in this regard.

II. EXPANDING NETWORK COVERAGE TO ACHIEVE INCREASED A-GPS HANDSET PENETRATION

In 2006, approximately ninety percent of the cell sites that SouthernLINC Wireless plans to construct are being built in small towns and rural areas. This construction constitutes almost [] of the Company's capital budget for the year. Additionally, in November and December 2005, following issuance of the Commission's *Order*, SouthernLINC Wireless added 13 sites which were in lower-density areas. The sites that have been, and will be, built were selected based on a number of criteria, including cost, elimination of coverage gaps, improved service quality, user density and other relevant factors. This expanded coverage will enhance overall safety, as SouthernLINC Wireless provides many subscribers their only available option for wireless communications services – including emergency services – in some areas.

SouthernLINC Wireless will continue to build-out sites consistent with sound commercial practices. While these additional sites could have a positive impact on

¹⁰ / *Id*.

¹¹ / In its Petition, SouthernLINC Wireless requested clarification regarding the showing that would be expected of it if the Commission, after acting on the Petition, still required SouthernLINC Wireless to address in a compliance plan its increasing efforts to ensure that customers are reflashing or upgrading their handsets. Petition at 15. Because the Commission has not yet acted on the Petition, SouthernLINC Wireless is providing this information herein without benefit of the clarification it seeks.

SouthernLINC Wireless's signal strength in rural areas and small communities, SouthernLINC Wireless believes that the increased number of sites cannot be expected to cause subscribers to trade-in their higher-power handsets for Phase II compliant phones. As explained in SouthernLINC Wireless' Petition, unlike other CMRS carriers serving customers with 1 or 3 watt handsets over *analog* systems that are being phased-out and replaced by digital systems, all SouthernLINC Wireless subscribers, regardless of the wattage of their handsets, are served by the same digital iDEN network, a network which is not being phased-out or replaced. ¹² Thus, any additional towers that SouthernLINC Wireless constructs will simply "push out" the areas where higher-power iDEN handsets can be used, continuing the incentive for subscribers – for whom such extended coverage is important – to use higher-powered handsets.

Consequently, SouthernLINC Wireless does not believe additional build-out will significantly improve the penetration of location-capable handsets. Its experience has been that the customer education and incentive initiatives such as those that SouthernLINC Wireless has undertaken and continues to enhance, as described in Section IV below, are substantially more likely to achieve full compliance with the Phase II handset penetration requirements. ¹³ It is SouthernLINC Wireless' belief that, in its case, the increase in the uptake of location-capable handsets by its customers is related to these initiatives, and not to system build-out.

 $^{^{12}}$ / Petition at 8-9.

¹³ / The Commission should recognize that, when making decisions on wireless phones, consumer behavior is driven by a myriad of factors and that each consumer's decision process is unique. While the wireless industry has invested millions (perhaps billions) in understanding consumer behavior, we cannot predict, in many instances, how consumers will ultimately react.

III. WORKING WITH HANDSET VENDORS TO PRODUCE A HIGHER-POWER A-GPS COMPLIANT PHONE

The Commission is aware that SouthernLINC Wireless uses Motorola's proprietary iDEN technology and platform.¹⁴ Accordingly, Motorola is the sole source manufacturer, vendor and supplier of iDEN handsets, equipment and technology. Motorola has never offered an A-GPS capable handset with a power level greater than 0.6 watts and, in response to SouthernLINC Wireless' inquiries on several occasions, has indicated that it has no plans to develop a Phase II compliant high-powered handset. A copy of a letter from Motorola explaining its position on this issue is attached hereto as Exhibit A. Because SouthernLINC Wireless, as a relatively small regional Tier III carrier, has little leverage to influence Motorola's decisions, it is not possible to include vendor-related efforts in SouthernLINC Wireless' compliance plan.

IV. EFFORTS TO ENSURE CUSTOMERS REFLASH OR UPGRADE TO A-GPS CAPABLE PHONES

In related filings, SouthernLINC Wireless detailed the aggressive promotional, marketing, and outreach initiatives it was taking to educate its subscribers on the need to reflash or upgrade to a location-capable handset, and to incent those subscribers to actually do so.¹⁵

These customer initiatives have included:¹⁶

• Providing customers with three alternative means of restoring location-capability to their handsets following the 2004 software problem: (1) a self-update kit consisting of the necessary software on a CD-ROM, instructions, and a special interface cable to connect the handset to a personal computer; (2) an offer to have SouthernLINC Wireless reprogram customer handsets at any SouthernLINC

¹⁴ / See, e.g., Request for Waiver at 9.

 $^{^{15}}$ / See, e.g., Request for Waiver at 21 – 23; Supplemental Filing at 3 – 5.

¹⁶ / These customer efforts are in addition to the extensive initiatives SouthernLINC Wireless has undertaken with Motorola, its equipment vendor, and with the PSAPs in its serving area. See, e.g., Request for Waiver at 21 – 23; Supplemental Filing at 2, 7.

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Wireless sales office and at some Southern Company utility offices; or (3) for government customers, a new or refurbished replacement phone furnished directly from Motorola.

- Providing customers with a toll-free number to call Motorola should they need
 additional information on the reflashing issue, and a link from SouthernLINC
 Wireless' website homepage to a Motorola web page where customers can order
 an A-GPS update kit online.
- Automatic inclusion in the "Motorola A-GPS Reflash Sweepstakes" of any SouthernLINC Wireless customer who had installed the updated software. The sweepstakes offered multiple prizes, with the grand prize being a Cadillac Escalade.
- Communicating with SouthernLINC Wireless dealers concerning the A-GPS software problem, and advising them and offering them a financial incentive to apply the software patch not only to their inventories, but also to any handsets that were brought in by customers specifically for reflashing or for any other service.
- Providing customers with full information on the A-GPS issue and the need to reflash or upgrade through SouthernLINC's website, and through mailing of selfinstall kits to all customer accounts believed to own affected handsets.
- Providing existing customers with incentives to upgrade to an A-GPS capable handset such as through a \$50 rebate offer during the first three quarters of 2005, and a "buy one, get one free" offer during the third and fourth quarters of 2005. (These incentives were also made available to new customers.)
- Linking the reflashing or upgrade initiative with the 800 MHz rebanding program by including reminders of the need to reflash or upgrade to location-capable phones as part of customer communications concerning the rebanding program.
- Holding fifteen "Customer Appreciation Days" between May and November 2005 where customers were invited to the SouthernLINC Wireless booth at various trade shows, government conferences, fairs and other community events, in order to have their handsets rebanded and reflashed, and to persuade other subscribers using incentive offers to upgrade their phones to A-GPS capable sets.
- Holding a three-day "Call the Customer" campaign in September 2005 which reached several thousand existing SouthernLINC Wireless customers in order to discuss rebanding and reflashing with those customers.
- Dispatching SouthernLINC Wireless service technicians on free site visits to customers with twenty or more handsets (*i.e.*, enterprise and government customers) in order to carry out rebanding and A-GPS upgrades.

These initiatives to reflash or upgrade handsets have had a substantial impact on subscriber take-up of location-capable sets, including users of higher-power phones. As of April 30, 2006, the number of SouthernLINC Wireless customers with Phase II-compliant handsets reached 60% of SouthernLINC Wireless' total subscriber base — up from 0 % less than two years ago (immediately after the software problem), from approximately 43% six months ago, and from approximately 54% just three months ago. ¹⁷ Moreover, the number of subscribers with non-location-capable higher-power digital handsets dropped to [] as of April 30, down from [] three months ago. ¹⁸

Other than the sweepstakes promotion, these and/or similar customer-related initiatives are continuing in 2006, and will continue until SouthernLINC Wireless reaches the 95% penetration level for location-capable handsets. To enhance these efforts, SouthernLINC Wireless is engaging in the following further initiatives:

- SouthernLINC Wireless recently launched a bill message communications plan to provide information to its customers about E-911. A sample of the language used in the message on customer bills is attached hereto as Exhibit B. The bill message, which will be sent two times per quarter until the end of 2006, is designed to draw customers' attention to the benefits of wireless E-911 service as well as the need for an A-GPS-capable phone and send them to a dedicated area on the SouthernLINC Wireless website for more details on E-911 services (see below).
- The Internet homepage of SouthernLINC Wireless now includes a prominently placed link to a dedicated area of the SouthernLINC Wireless website that provides customers with details about E911 services, including the availability of basic, Phase I, and Phase II services across SouthernLINC Wireless' service territory and information on which handset models are location-capable. A link

¹⁷ / See SouthernLINC Wireless E911 Phase II Quarterly Report: May 1, 2006, CC Docket No. 94-102, filed May 1, 2006, at 7 ("May 1 Quarterly Report"); SouthernLINC Wireless E911 Phase II Quarterly Report: February 1, 2006, CC Docket No. 94-102, filed February 1, 2006, at 7 ("February 1 Quarterly Report").

¹⁸ / See May 1 Quarterly Report at 7; February 1 Quarterly Report at 6.

^{19 /} See http://www.southernlinc.com.

to information on SouthernLINC Wireless' current handset promotions has also been provided at this website location so that customers can make decisions on handset upgrades, should they choose to do so. This section of the website was launched in early February 2006.

- In the second quarter of 2006, SouthernLINC Wireless added a message about A-GPS handsets and 911 service to its "on-hold" message at its customer support center, providing customers with another avenue from which to learn about the importance of location capabilities in emergency situations.
- SouthernLINC Wireless offered a very attractive handset promotion program during the first quarter of 2006 which encouraged customers to upgrade to new, location-capable handsets. Under this program, existing customers in good standing were able to choose among three different location-capable phones which, after a mail-in rebate, were free to customers.
- During the second quarter of 2006, most subscribers will be able to purchase two phones for the price of one through SouthernLINC Wireless' direct sales channel. This promotion is applicable to virtually every A-GPS compliant phone offered by SouthernLINC Wireless. Beyond this broad promotion, SouthernLINC Wireless has just launched a phone promotion in its stores that makes one of the A-GPS capable phones available for \$9.99 and a second one for free. Finally, most customers in good standing wanting to upgrade to an A-GPS-capable handset who wish to shop through SouthernLINC Wireless' online store can obtain a new handset at half-price. SouthernLINC Wireless will also have attractive handset promotions available for the third and fourth quarters of 2006; the details, however, are not available at this time.
- SouthernLINC Wireless will soon be sending out a letter to all subscribers that are known to still possess a non-A-GPS capable phone. This letter will explain, as SouthernLINC Wireless has done numerous times before, the benefits of having a location-capable phone and will urge the customer to take action to upgrade their current phones.

V. CONCLUSION

As demonstrated above, SouthernLINC Wireless has a comprehensive plan focusing on persuading and incenting customers to reflash or upgrade to a location-capable handset.

Although SouthernLINC Wireless has already achieved significant results toward full compliance with the E911 Phase II requirements, it will continue to enhance its initiatives in

²⁰ / This direct mail piece will go out in late June or early July 2006.

response to customer receptiveness and market conditions. SouthernLINC Wireless will continue to keep the Commission apprised of new initiatives and programs through its quarterly E911 Phase II reports or through supplements to this compliance plan, as appropriate.

Respectfully submitted,

SOUTHERNLINC WIRELESS

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Dated: May 3, 2006

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EXHIBIT A

Letter from Motorola to SouthernLINC Wireless dated December 2, 2005



December 2, 2005

Mr. Michael Rosenthal
Director, Legal and External Affairs
SouthernLINC Wireless
5555 Glen Ridge Connector
Suite 500
Atlanta, GA 30342

Re: AGPS Capability in iDEN Communication Products

Dear Mr. Rosenthal,

Motorola includes the AGPS capability in all its currently shipping iDEN communication subscriber products. Motorola has never offered and has no plans to develop iDEN communication subscriber products that can support both AGPS and a power level of greater than .6 watts. While some of our legacy products, developed long before the AGPS feature was developed on the iDEN platform and currently still in use by SouthernLINC Wireless customers, did provide power levels of 1 watt and greater, the power level of .6 watts is the maximum level supported by our current subscriber product platform.

If further information regarding this matter is required from Motorola, please do not hesitate to contact me directly.

Telebola

Respectfully,

Julio Abataka

Senior Director of Engineering

iDEN Mobile Devices

Motorola, Inc.

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EXHIBIT B

Sample Customer Bill Message

Bill Message

Safety Continues to be a Priority for SouthernLINC Wireless! SouthernLINC Wireless is expanding the area in our footprint where Enhanced 911 (E911) service is available. E911 service provides emergency response agencies important information that helps them dispatch assistance to you, such as the telephone number from which a call to 911 is placed. In areas where the emergency response agencies have updated their equipment, they can also receive the approximate location of the caller. This information can be critical to obtaining help rapidly, but it is available only if your phone has A-GPS-capabilities. Visit your local SouthernLINC Wireless store or dealer today to make sure that you have an A-GPS-capable phone. To learn what areas E911 is now available in our SouthernLINC Wireless footprint, visit www.southernlinc.com.